



CONSTELLATION

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Navigating the Anacostia and Potomac

Debris removal team keeps D.C. navigation channels clear

By Chanel S. Weaver
Public Affairs Office

As the sun rises in Washington, D.C. one weekday morning, so does the tension. Traffic along the major highways and corridors leading in and out of the nation's capital begins to slow to a crawl. Students and workers alike hustle along the streets, hoping they will get to their destinations on time. A newspaper salesman frantically waves a copy of *The Washington Post*, hoping to bring in a few more proceeds.

Everyone is moving.

And in complete harmony with the city surrounding them, the Baltimore District debris removal team moves its boats out on the Anacostia and Potomac rivers. The calm waters and gentle wind move with the workers, signaling the start of a brand new day.

The team likes to begin early — knowing they have an important mission ahead of them: to remove any debris and obstacles to navigation within the federal channels of the Anacostia and Potomac rivers.

A great percentage of what they remove from the river are trunks and branches from maple, cedar and oak trees. They dump the material into yellow bins and the debris is hauled off to local landfills.

But not all of this lumber is discarded. About 60 percent of it is sold to local milling companies to make paper and chopping wood for the fireplace.



(Photo by Jennifer Walsh, Public Affairs)

A Baltimore District debris boat pushes a full platform of debris towards the D.C. Drift, where it will be unloaded by a crane operator.

Trees are not the only obstructions that appear in the water, however. The team also removes tires, refrigerators and even portable toilets.

"You'd be surprised to see some of the things that we remove from the water," said Charlie Campbell, a small craft operator.

Last year, they removed more than 123,000 cubic feet of debris from the rivers.

The Baltimore District debris removal team also travels occasionally. They have journeyed to Maryland's eastern shore to assist in removal actions, and there have even been a few occasions where they have been asked to assist federal and local authorities with recovering a body from the waters of the Anacostia or Potomac.

"We go wherever we are needed," said Campbell.

Although some days are challenging, Baltimore District members who work on the debris removal team said they

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U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers
Baltimore District

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District Engineer:
Col. Peter W. Mueller

Public Affairs Chief:
Carolyn Jackson

Editor:
Katisha Draughn

Contributors:
Christopher Augsburger
Joyce Conant
Angela Moore
Jennifer Walsh
Chanel S. Weaver



Commander's Comment

Communications! Who's on First?

By Col. Peter W. Mueller
Commander and District Engineer

Bad news does not get better with age. Actions speak louder than words. Never go to bed angry — discuss your disagreements. There are plenty of sayings that relate to communications. But, two facts are very clear. No matter the saying, communicating is a skill that each of us must use regardless of our position and effective communication is vital to our success as individuals and as an organization.

We have all experienced the impact of poor communication at some time. The stories of information not relayed in advance of Pearl Harbor by the military chain of command or the miscommunications portrayed in Abbott and Costello's *Who's on First?* are famous examples of communication lapses. We all have our own examples of serious and humorous miscommunications that could have been avoided if we had just been better prepared or more aware of what, how, when or to whom we should have communicated.

I am a firm believer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers — in our processes and in our people. But, when we do make mistakes, I believe in most cases the mistake boils down to poor communication. I'm not alone in these thoughts. When I met with District senior leaders, an overarching issue that became one of our goals was *Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!* Our objectives are to listen to understand and respect all viewpoints; communicate proactively and positively both internally and externally; and demonstrate effective two-way communication and align our actions with our words. These are

great objectives that complement the USACE Communications Principles (see next page).

Pursuing these objectives does not mean we all need to bombard each other with data or put out massive amounts of information. Rather, our actions are to ensure we are aware of what, how, when and to whom we need to communicate. Communications is not just one way, listening is at least 50 percent of this activity. It is not just verbal. Body language, expressions or silence also send messages. The science of communications includes six key elements: the person that sends a message, the type of message being sent (verbal, written or nonverbal), the mode or channel by which the message is being relayed, the audience or receiver of the message, feedback provided by the audience and the situation or environment the communications is being made in. These all contribute to effective communications.

I am constantly working to understand and use these tools in the most efficient, effective manner. I use the chain of command, office or field visits, public events, scheduled meetings, the Commanders Critical Information Requirement, written correspondence, e-mail, the brown bag lunch, the elevator and many other venues to provide information to you and to listen to employees and customers. As each of you go about your business each day, consciously stop and think about what information you have that you may need to share with another person. Think about how to put the bottom line upfront (BLUF), when and how best to transmit it, how much you need to say, or if anything really needs to be said at all. Let's leave *Who's on First?* to Abbott and Costello. Being first rate communicators is our goal!

— Essayons

Debris Removal Team

(continued from the cover)

thoroughly enjoy their jobs.

“It’s so refreshing to be out here on the water — especially in the summertime,” said Joe Huber, a boat operator. “When you leave at the end of the day, you feel like you’ve accomplished something.”

Becoming a boat operator may seem like a relatively simple job, but getting the job is no easy task.

“We take a written test, log hours on the boat, have a complete physical, and have to be CPR-certified,” said Huber.

Occasionally such events like sleet and high winds keep the boats docked, but on these days, the team performs maintenance on the boats.

J.T. Hand, chief of the Navigation Branch in the Operations Division, said the members of the debris removal team reinforce the Corps’ environmental operating principles everyday through the manner in which they perform their duties. He said the team displays a great sense of pride in their boats, their mission and the Corps’ legacy on the nation’s waters.

“The team goes out of their way to ensure that the boats are kept in mint condition,” said Hand. “They know these boats are their livelihood.”

Although the debris removal team carefully performs



(Photo by Jennifer Walsh, Public Affairs)

Joe Huber, a boat operator in the Operations Division, unloads tree limbs and other debris found in the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers.

maintenance on these boats because of a dedication to the mission, they also admit that they take care of the debris removal boats for selfish reasons.

“If you get out here and this thing breaks down, you can’t walk back,” said Huber.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Communication Principles

- Listen to all constituencies both inside and outside USACE regarding issues of importance to them, respecting their viewpoint.
- Communicate early, clearly, completely, honestly, accurately, and often with all constituencies on issues of importance.
- Incorporate communication activities as an integral part of project management business process.
- Be accessible to all constituencies and respond promptly without censorship or misinformation.
- Proactively inform the public and other constituencies of the Corps vital role in areas where we have special expertise.
- Do what we say we will do.



A Distinguished Career:

Washington Aqueduct employee retires after 60 years of service

Although many designers complete their sketches on a computer, George Monch still values drawing the details of buildings and projects by hand. He will retire from the Corps of Engineers next month after working for more than 60 years.

By Chanel S. Weaver
Public Affairs Office

A typical work day for George Monch begins early. He gets up at 5:30 a.m., gets dressed, and is out of the door by 6:30 a.m. He then drives 16 miles to his job, arriving by 7:00 a.m. When he arrives, he enjoys a light breakfast, before working the next eight hours. At 3:30 p.m., he gets in his car and drives home. He's normally home by 4 p.m., just in time to watch a little of the evening news.

But after 60 years of this routine, Monch has finally decided to call it "quits."

The senior civil engineering technician at Washington Aqueduct will retire from the Corps May 1.

Although he could have retired some 30 odd years ago, Monch, 78, said working was more productive since his wife died 23 years ago.

"I think working keeps you young," said Monch. "At the Aqueduct, no job is boring and you are never doing the same thing constantly."

Monch certainly had enough work to keep him young. He makes sketches and draws the intricate details for many buildings and structures. Over the years, he has drawn the designs for such places as

shop buildings, basins, the stones on the Cabin John Bridge in Washington, D.C. and the operational drawings for the pumping stations at the C&O Canal in Cumberland, Md.

Monch has seen the Corps evolve over the years. In an era where most designers let the computer do the drawing, you can still find Monch drawing at his desk, with ruler and pencil in hand. Many of the details of buildings at the Aqueduct were designed by him.

Those who work with Monch said he is a fine example.

"I can't imagine being committed to anything for 60 years," said Patricia Gamby, a section chief in the planning and engineering branch of the Aqueduct. "George shows his dedication and love for his job. It's amazing to work with him and learn from him."

Like Gamby, Sandy Souders, a program support assistant at the Aqueduct, said she admires Monch for his commitment and patience.

"George is one of my favorite people," said Souders. "He's knowledgeable, kind and will always take the time to instruct someone."

As a testament to his work ethic, Monch's cubicle is decorated with numerous awards and accolades for his service over the years.

With the exception of a quadruple-bypass heart surgery 21 years ago, Monch has had relatively few health problems. People often ask him if he has any special secret for staying healthy, but Monch said he keeps things simple — including his diet.

"I eat oatmeal, a cup of coffee and a piece of fruit every morning," said Monch.

But he does offer some advice for living a long, healthy life.

"Enjoy what you do and enjoy your work," said Monch. "Don't let things bother you."

Do you know the history of PPMD?

By Ed Lazarus
Engineering Division

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District has many divisions and support offices. Have you ever wondered how each one came into existence? Here is the story of how the Programs and Project Management Division was created.

The requirements of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 raised a number of issues concerning the traditional Corps approach to civil works project development. The Corps, who was the overall manager of planning, design and construction, was required to retain contracting officer authority of Federal contracts and overall oversight and approval of all work performed.

Relying on his extensive experience in private management, Robert W. Page, Sr., Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, instituted changes in the Corps calling for five new efficiencies: acceleration of schedules, control of cost and schedules, clarifying organization roles and duties, assigning a project manager and construction productivity advanced research. Page and Lt. Gen. Henry J. Hatch, Chief of Engineers, initiated the concept of a separate project management division for the Corps

headquarters, divisions and districts.

The Corps of Engineers North Atlantic Baltimore organization began with a small group devoted to civil projects only. PPMD expanded to include military projects in 1992 and environmental projects in 1993.

As a result of the PM organizational effort, various organizational models were developed. The CENAB model included individual PMs in the PM Division for civil works and other projects. Individual PMs located in technical divisions were necessary for resource economies. PM support and liaison groups were placed in the PM Division. Technical divisions performed technical and PM functions. This model includes designating installation project managers as appropriate for military construction and major environmental projects. The model allows customer relations to be addressed by both PPMD and the various divisions during planning, design and construction management. It also emphasizes function, not organizational structure, for performance.

In January 1993, the Baltimore District Commander, Col J. Richard Capka, announced the implementation of a further change in project management at Baltimore District, stating that the objective was to enhance mission performance with an increased focus on addressing customer expectations of quality and timeliness and increased accountability and management continuity. Civil works programming support functions, project management and programming support functions from the Engineering Division's Military Projects Management Branch, and project management programming support functions were transferred to PPMD.

The present roles of the PMs include leader of the project team of technical managers, project management plan preparation and compliance, budget project funds to district elements, manage project schedule, cost and funds, identify and resolve project issues, prepare reports and serve as a primary point of contact. Team building is a key aspect of the project management concept. Prior to the creation of PPMD, people were working with their own stovepipes and handing products off to other divisions or offices once they completed their portion of the work. The PM brings the focus, which results in more timely execution, more satisfied customers and a project that is completed more effectively.



(Photo by Christopher Augsburger, Public Affairs)

High water from the Susquehanna River runs up rip rap and towards a flood wall during a high-water event in June 2006. The flood wall is part of the Wyoming Valley Levee System, which was recently raised and completed January 2003, and managed by the Programs and Project Management Division.

Administrative Assistants keep District running smoothly

Story and photos by
Jennifer Walsh
Public Affairs Office

Ask a person walking down the street what they think administrative assistants do all day and you might get a response such as, "answer the phone" or "type letters". Ask an administrative assistant at the Baltimore District what they do all day and you'll get a list as long as your arm.

Administrative assistants, also known as secretaries or office assistants, are no longer expected to spend eight hours a day typing correspondence or answering the phones. Instead, they are responsible for managing the smaller details of the offices, divisions and branches they work for.

Ever needed travel orders, a government vehicle or permission to take a laptop home? How about problems with your paycheck? It almost goes without

saying that without these men and women, the District would fall apart from the inside out.

Almost.

While the administrative assistants make up the backbone of the District, they are some of the most unrecognized employees.

"They keep the lights on, the telephones running and the contractors happy," said Marilyn Jones, operations project manager, Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes Project Office. "If they could leap tall buildings, they would."

As Administrative Assistants Day approaches this month, take a minute to walk a mile in a pair of administrative shoes.

"I think most people's perception of the administrative professional is probably the same as it always has been," said Tammy Cleveland, office assistant for the natural resource management staff at the Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes Visitor Information Center. "It's the person typing, filing and answering the phone, but that is just scratching the surface."

As an office assistant, Cleveland spends a good deal of time assisting the public, doing payroll, filing correspondence and maintaining a staff calendar. However, she also acts as the recreation fee cashier and the systems administrator for the staff on site.

"No two days are ever the same in this position," said Cleveland. "I might spend one whole day trying to solve computer problems, another counting day use and camping fees and another doing payroll or other functions in the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System."

While Cleveland is surrounded by the picturesque



Barbara Bond, office support assistant for the Safety and Occupational Health Office, looks through some important files. Bond plays an important role in her office by helping with accident prevention plans and defensive driving courses.

outdoors, the administrative assistants in downtown Baltimore face the same multi-tasking challenges in an urban setting.

"I do time, credit card payments and handle the conference room," said Barbara Bond, office support assistant for the Safety and Occupational Health Office. "I also keep up with accident prevention plans, defensive driving courses and I'm the coordinator for the training videos."

Bond, who has been with the District for 22 years, stays busy most days but still

finds time to enjoy her work.

"My favorite part of the job is interacting with people," said Bond. "It makes the day go faster."

Social interaction plays a significant role in most administrative jobs because the administrative assistant is usually the first person a client sees when they walk into an office or the first voice a customer hears over the phone.

"Administrative professionals are the first level of contact in any agency," said

"No two days are ever the same in this position."

-Tammy Cleveland
Office Assistant

Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes Visitor Information Center

Lisa Biehl, program support assistant for the Operations Division. "It requires that you know you are the first impression."

Biehl, who does most of her work at a desk, focuses on the CEFMS program and the budget. When asked what qualities a person needed to be successful at her job, she quickly verbalized what 27 years of experience with the federal government had taught her.

"You have to like computer work and you have to like accounting work," said Biehl as she laughed. "And you have to like repetition."

Another administrative assistant that spends a substantial amount of time working on the computer is Valerie Chambers, program support specialist for the Operations Division.

"I begin the day around 8 a.m. and I work on the computer for most of the day doing Request for Personnel Actions," said Chambers.

RPA's are the driving force behind personnel changes within the District, making promotions and transfers possible.

Chambers also runs the summer and seasonal work programs for the field offices. Beginning around March, she's busy making accommodations for new District employees and coordinating between Human Resources and the field offices.

"I'm the liaison between the field managers, the office managers, personnel, Human Resources and the Civilian Personnel Operations Center," said Chambers. "Everyone goes through me and if I don't know the answer, I find out."

JoAnn Ellison, administrative support assistant for the Logistics Management Office, also keeps a busy schedule.

"Some days are fast," said Ellison as she rapidly snapped her fingers. "Just like this."

In the Logistics Management Office, Ellison is responsible for time and attendance, authenticating travel orders and working on correspondence that needs to be typed or edited. In addition, she fixes malfunctioning key cards and issues property passes for equipment taken off District property.

"I think all of the administrative professionals should be recognized more," said Ellison. "We're the ones that help the office run."

Remember to show your administrative assistant how much you appreciate their hard work on April 25, Administrative Assistants Day.



JoAnn Ellison, administrative support assistant in the Logistics Management Office, investigates some computer work. Some of Ellison's duties include checking time and attendance and issuing property passes for District equipment.



Sobo Sports attracts District employees

By Katisha Draughn
Public Affairs Office

It has been a long week and the weekend is finally here. Many of us find ourselves spending this time with family and friends, shopping or doing some extra much needed work around the house. Then there are those employees who spend their weekends participating in Sobo Sports.

Sobo Sports is a recreational sports league based in South Baltimore. It was created in 2002 and has become very popular among many District employees.

"I began playing in co-ed flag football leagues in Washington D.C. when I first moved to the area as a way of meeting people," said Erika Mark, a biologist in the Planning Division. "When I moved to Baltimore I signed up for Sobo football because I had such a great experience in D.C. I've played on several different teams in the last few years and have made some good friends in the process."

Earl Gilliam, a project engineer in the Construction Division, Bay Area Office, found out about Sobo Sports from another District employee. He wanted the opportunity to play on a football team, but many of the leagues he found played on Sundays, which conflicted with his other commitments.

The Sobo Sports leagues have daily games to better accommodate the players schedules. Some of these leagues are touch football, softball, volleyball, kickball and shuffleboard. The co-ed leagues allow employees to interact with other players,

regardless of their gender.

"I think it is very important for men and women to play on the same team because it develops communication skills and requires men to recognize the physical and athletic abilities of women," Gilliam said. "Our team is composed of nine talented women who can do it all; run, catch and throw touchdowns."

Gilliam, who plays football for Team Worldwide, believes that playing in this league helps develop teamwork and friendships among employees.

"It definitely builds comradery because you are interacting in a social setting without the pressure of TAPES (Total Army Performance Evaluation System), deadlines or budgets," he said.

Gilliam's teammate, Adrian DeVillasee, a project engineer in the Construction Division, D.C. Programs Office, enjoys playing touch football, showing off his skills on the field and spending time with fellow teammates.

"Whether we win or lose, everyone on the team is supportive of each other," he said. "I think playing in things like this automatically brings people closer together."

This closeness allows employees the chance to build relationships in and out of the office and work together as a team.

"The sports team brings people of different backgrounds together supporting each other in the same cause," said Yanique Conway, an electrical engineer in the Engineering Division. "Being involved also gives you the opportunity to get to know co-workers that you would otherwise just pass in the hall."

For more information about Sobo Sports visit their Web site at www.sobosports.com.

Teamwork pays off...



(Photo by Katisha Draughn, Public Affairs)

District employees from the Real Estate and Resource Management Divisions were recognized for their hard work and tireless efforts when they helped lease approximately 34 apartments to house Soldiers displaced due to pending repairs for Building 18 at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The employees leased the apartments over a three-day time period. They are (front row, left to right) Mary Hollobaugh, Debbie Jankowiak, Sherry Johnson and Karen Reed; (back row, left to right) Carol Bostwick, Dell Jackson, Craig Benson, Jo'Nita Pearce, Helen Bunche and Craig Stelts. Not pictured are Sue Lewis and Cheryl Janiszewski.

Prevent bad backs and strained muscles, use proper lifting techniques

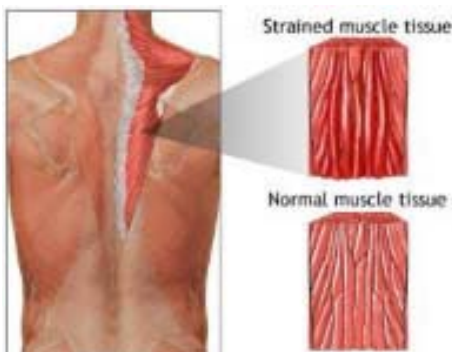
By John Houvener
Safety and Occupational Health Office



Among the most common and costly (in terms of lost time) injuries suffered by Baltimore District employees are back injuries. These can involve injuries to the spinal column and strains or sprains to the muscles, tendons and ligaments of the back. These types of injuries seem to increase during the spring months, both at work and at home.

Lifting injuries and/or muscle strains aren't usually caused by picking up vehicle transmissions or 55 gallon drums. Instead, they frequently involve improper lifting of common smaller items such as boxes of computer paper or bags of mulch. Straining muscles doing things we don't normally do is another cause of injuries.

Look around your workplace and at home and pay attention to the things you do each day. Try to identify the tasks that require lifting, bending, pulling, pushing etc., and then apply some simple ergonomics rules to reduce injury and, where possible, eliminate the need for manual lifting. Talk to your supervisor (or spouse) about your ideas for more efficient and easier materials handling (just think, this could be a way to get that new tool or snow blower you've always wanted). Doing simple things might make a big difference and keep you working.



Here are some tips for safe lifting:

- Plan your route so you have a clear path to carry the item. Have a place to put the item down once you reach your destination.
- Check the weight of the item you will be lifting to see if you will need help. Do this by grasping the object firmly by an outside corner and tipping it towards you. You should be able to tell if it is too heavy.
- Use the proper devices for lifting and carrying. Materials handling equipment such as handcarts and stock pickers can help you move materials without straining your back.
- Ask for help from co-workers. When you do a team lift, appoint one person as the leader who tells everyone else when to pick up the object and put it down.
- Bend your knees when you lift instead of stooping over. Hold your back straight and vertical to the ground. If you keep your head up, your eyes looking ahead and your stomach muscles tight, you will be able to maintain the right posture.
- Keep the item close to your body. Lifting or carrying an object at arm's length puts much more strain on your back.

Here are more tips for preventing back injuries:

- Do warm-ups before any physical exertion (shoveling, digging, materials handling).
- Avoid excessive bending, reaching or twisting motions.
- Stand up straight, but not rigid. Keep your knees flexed and maintain the natural curves in your back.
- When sitting, choose a comfortable, relaxed position in which your back is straight. Don't slouch.
- When you are lying down, keep your back curved naturally. Use a low pillow under your head and neck (don't try this at work; it might get you in trouble).
- Avoid sleeping on your stomach (especially at work).
- Maintain physical fitness. Exercise to keep the muscles of your back and abdomen strong.

Arrange your work area to decrease the need for lifting and moving materials. Proper planning can reduce the need to handle heavy objects unnecessarily.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers *Annual Take Your Child to Work Day*



**Thursday, April 26
8 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

For children ages 8-14

Registration Deadline is April 20

To register contact Sarah Miller, (410) 962-2558. For more information e-mail Kimberly.Jirsa@usace.army.mil.

Speakers Bureau Update



Marilyn K. Jones, OP, Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes Project Office, spoke to the Blossburg High School juniors and seniors in Blossburg, Pa. March 9.

Jones spoke to approximately 93 students about the Corps of Engineers, its missions and careers within the organization.

Empowered at the Federal Women's Conference...



(Photo by Angela Moore, Public Affairs)

District employees Darlene Greer (center) of Human Resources and Doris Faulkner (right) of the Engineering Division stop with another conference attendee at the Books Are Fun Vendor during the 25th annual Federal Women's Conference March 22. This year's theme was Generations of Women Moving History Forward. The conference included several workshops such as Innovative Teambuilding, Leadership for Women, and Polishing Your Image Through Presentations. The keynote speaker was Nancy Kichak, associate director of the Strategic Human Resources Policy Division. Kichak spoke about the contributions women have made to the federal government. Attendees had the opportunity to network with other federal employees, visit with exhibitors and vendors and learn more about the role of women in the workplace.

District Awards Ceremony



Theme: “We Make a Difference”

Date: Tuesday, April 10

Time: 10 - 11:30 a.m.

**Location: The Sheraton Baltimore
(formally the Wyndham)
101 West Fayette Street**

All employees are encouraged to attend

Lunch with the Commander...



(Photo by Jennifer Walsh, Public Affairs)

Col. Peter W. Mueller answers questions from employees at the Brown Bag Luncheon March 16. Mueller wanted to give District employees the opportunity to talk about significant issues affecting the Corps. Employees asked Mueller questions about Base Realignment and Closure, the Leadership Development Program, the National Security Personnel System and the problems with the defective pumps in New Orleans, La.

American Red Cross Blood Drive



Date: Friday, April 6

Time: 8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

***Location: EEOC Conference
Room, Fourth Floor***

***For More Information contact
Stephanie Matthews, Human
Resources, (410) 962-2087.***